

02-25-00

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**UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL**  
**(Large Entity)**

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Docket No.  
(BU999-152)Total Pages in this Submission  
3**TO THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS**Box Patent Application  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Transmitted herewith for filing under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) and 37 C.F.R. 1.53(b) is a new utility patent application for invention entitled:

**METHOD FOR MEASUREMENT OF FULL TWO-DIMENSIONAL SUBMICRON SHAPES**

and invented by:

**Edward C. Conrad, David P. Paul**If a **CONTINUATION APPLICATION**, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:☐ Continuation ☐ Divisional ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP) of prior application No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Which is a:

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☐ Continuation ☐ Divisional ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP) of prior application No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed are:

**Application Elements**

1. ☒ Filing fee as calculated and transmitted as described below
2. ☒ Specification having 13 pages and including the following:
  - a. ☒ Descriptive Title of the Invention
  - b. ☐ Cross References to Related Applications (if applicable)
  - c. ☐ Statement Regarding Federally-sponsored Research/Development (if applicable)
  - d. ☐ Reference to Microfiche Appendix (if applicable)
  - e. ☒ Background of the Invention
  - f. ☒ Brief Summary of the Invention
  - g. ☒ Brief Description of the Drawings (if drawings filed)
  - h. ☒ Detailed Description
  - i. ☒ Claim(s) as Classified Below
  - j. ☒ Abstract of the Disclosure

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**(Large Entity)**

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3

**Application Elements (Continued)**

3. ☒ Drawing(s) *(when necessary as prescribed by 35 USC 113)*
- a. ☒ Formal                      Number of Sheets                      12
- b. ☐ Informal                      Number of Sheets                      \_\_\_\_\_
4. ☒ Oath or Declaration
- a. ☒ Newly executed *(original or copy)*                      ☐ Unexecuted
- b. ☐ Copy from a prior application (37 CFR 1.63(d)) *(for continuation/divisional application only)*
- c. ☒ With Power of Attorney                      ☐ Without Power of Attorney
- d. ☐ DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)  
Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application,  
see 37 C.F.R. 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5. ☐ Incorporation By Reference *(usable if Box 4b is checked)*  
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied  
under Box 4b, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby  
incorporated by reference therein.
6. ☐ Computer Program in Microfiche *(Appendix)*
7. ☐ Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission *(if applicable, all must be included)*
- a. ☐ Paper Copy
- b. ☐ Computer Readable Copy *(identical to computer copy)*
- c. ☐ Statement Verifying Identical Paper and Computer Readable Copy

**Accompanying Application Parts**

8. ☒ Assignment Papers *(cover sheet & document(s))*
9. ☐ 37 CFR 3.73(B) Statement *(when there is an assignee)*
10. ☐ English Translation Document *(if applicable)*
11. ☒ Information Disclosure Statement/PTO-1449                      ☒ Copies of IDS Citations
12. ☐ Preliminary Amendment
13. ☒ Acknowledgment postcard
14. ☒ Certificate of Mailing
- ☐ First Class                      ☒ Express Mail *(Specify Label No.):* EE344993833US

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Total Pages in this Submission  
3

**Accompanying Application Parts (Continued)**

15. ☐ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed)

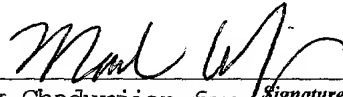
16. ☐ Additional Enclosures (please identify below):

**Fee Calculation and Transmittal**

**CLAIMS AS FILED**

For	#Filed	#Allowed	#Extra	Rate	Fee
Total Claims	15	- 20 =	0	x \$18.00	\$0.00
Indep. Claims	3	- 3 =	0	x \$78.00	\$0.00
Multiple Dependent Claims (check if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/>					\$0.00
BASIC FEE					\$690.00
OTHER FEE (specify purpose)					
TOTAL FILING FEE					\$690.00

- ☐ A check in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ to cover the filing fee is enclosed.
- ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge and credit Deposit Account No. 09-0456/IBM as described below. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.
- ☒ Charge the amount of \$690.00 as filing fee.
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  - ☐ Charge the issue fee set in 37 C.F.R. 1.18 at the mailing of the Notice of Allowance, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.311(b).

  
Mark Chadurjian for  
William D. Sabo  
Registration No. 27,465

Dated: 2/24/00

cc:

IBM Corporation  
Intellectual Property Law - Zip 972E  
1000 River Street  
Essex Junction, Vermont 05452  
(802) 769-9454

**APPLICATION  
FOR  
UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT**

**APPLICANT NAME:** Edward W. Conrad and David P. Paul

**TITLE:** Method and System For Measurement of Full Two-Dimensional  
Submicron Shapes

**DOCKET NO.** BU9-99-152

**INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION**

**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING UNDER 37 CFR 1.10**

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Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR MEASUREMENT OF FULL  
TWO-DIMENSIONAL SUBMICRON SHAPES

Background Of The Invention

5

This invention generally relates to measuring submicron structures or shapes; and more specifically, the invention relates to measuring such shapes from electron beam images of the shapes. Even more specifically, the present invention relates to a measurement procedure and system particularly well suited for determining the relative position of edges of submicron structures or shapes formed by photolithography on semiconductor wafers.

15

As photolithography K factors continue to decrease and complex reticle enhancement techniques are employed, the printed shapes appearing on the wafer can vary dramatically from the design in both shape and location. The traditional metrics of line width and overlay, although still useful, often are inadequate for predicting many effects on product. A means of accurately measuring wafer images in a full two dimensions is required for a variety of applications including fully understanding effects of imaging, etching, and other wafer processing on product performance. Another especially important application of two-dimensional shape metrology is for use in the calibration of shape prediction models that are just becoming widely offered in the semiconductor industry.

30

Little has been done in the area of full two-dimensional submicron shape metrology. Early two dimensional submicron measurements are generally achieved with a top down SEM. Metrology SEMs are generally one-dimensional instruments, that scan in a single direction that is approximately normal to the edge to be detected. An edge detection algorithm is then applied to this signal. Early attempts at two-dimensional metrology with SEM's consist of multiple one-dimensional measurements (e.g. to evaluate a bar, a scan along the width will be followed by a different scan along the length). This treatment of shapes is generally inadequate for many applications in terms of quantity of data and it is customary for the scans to be independent (i.e. the two scans are not connected by a coordinate system with a single origin).

#### Summary Of The Invention

An object of this invention is to improve methods and systems for measuring submicron shapes.

Another object of the present invention is to use an image of a submicron shape to identify relative position of edges of that shape.

These and other objectives are attained with a method and apparatus for extracting two-dimensional image shapes from image data on a pixel array. The method comprises the steps of selecting intensity vs. pixel information in at least one direction in the vicinity of an edge of the image shape, and recognizing scans with sufficient

contrast as containing edge information. Acceptable scans are subjected to an edge detection algorithm and the edge location is detected. The locus of points generated from applying edge detection at multiple points around the image define the two-dimensional shape of the image.

Any suitable edge detection algorithm may be used. That algorithm may be a user defined edge detection algorithm tailored for the application, and, for example, a threshold edge detection algorithm may be employed. Also, in a preferred embodiment, the selecting step includes the step of selecting intensity vs. pixel information in at least four directions, and the plurality of directions are angularly spaced apart at least about 45 degrees. With one embodiment, one of these directions may be normal to an approximate edge location.

Further benefits and advantages of the invention will become apparent from a consideration of the following detailed description, given with reference to the accompanying drawings, which specify and show preferred embodiments of the invention.

#### Brief Description Of The Drawings

Figure 1 shows an SEM micrograph of a resist "L" shaped structure.

Figure 2 shows the plot of a shape using constant contour intensity approximation.

Figure 3 shows the area of an "L" shape that was selected for scans.

5 Figure 4 is a graph of the intensity value vs. pixel location for the pixels along a forty-five degree scan.

Figure 5 is a graph of the intensity value vs. pixel location for the pixels along a horizontal scan.

10 Figures 6 and 7 show graphs of the intensity value vs. pixel location for the pixels along two additional scans suitable for edge detection.

15 Figure 8 shows the graphs of Figures 4-7 superimposed.

Figure 9 shows the measured shape resulting from a method embodying the present invention.

20 Figure 10 shows the shape of a structure determined by using a constant intensity method, and the shape of the same structure determined by using a method embodying this invention.

25 Figures 11 and 12 show enlarged portions of Figure 10.

Figures 13 and 14 show a computer system that may be used in the invention.

30 Figure 15 illustrates a memory medium that can be used to hold a computer program for carrying out this invention.



## Detailed Description Of The Preferred Embodiments

The method being disclosed makes use of a two-dimensional SEM image which consists of a regular grid of detector  
5 signal values that have a one-to-one correspondence with the position of the electron beam. The detector signal is related to the number of electrons collected by one or more detectors as a function of beam location on the sample under investigation.

10 Figure 1 shows a typical SEM micrograph. The images in Figure 1 comprise a set of "L" shapes which include corners such that edges are oriented at all angles from horizontal to vertical. Traditional SEM metrology of  
15 such a sample would require multiple mountings of the sample in various rotation states, or multiple scans with a rotated beam. For high accuracy measurements, each of the beam rotation states requires a separate calibration.

20 The method disclosed herein makes use of the fact that the detector signal peaks in the vicinity of an edge, as shown in Figure 3. Since the edge is at a higher intensity than the rest of the background a relatively high constant intensity contour gives an approximate  
25 estimate of the edge location, as shown in contour plot of Figure 2. Using this approximate edge location as a starting point, a line or scan of pixel intensities can be selected that passes through the approximate edge pixel location in any of many directions.

30 It is possible to make use of the normal to the approximate edge location and interpolation to produce

intensity vs. position for lines that pass through the approximate edge at very close to normal. However, in practice it is found that by selecting intensity vs. pixel location for four directions, the edge can be reliably detected. Four scans ensures that a scan will be no more than 22.5 degrees off from the normal to the edge. More or less scans would also, generally, produce acceptable results.

Figures 4-8 show selected pixel intensity vs. pixel number for the x direction, the y direction, and each of the two +/-45-degree directions the designated (circled) area at the bottom of the shape in Figure 3. Three of the four scans show good "contrast" (or range of intensity variation) as the edge is crossed. The horizontal scan shows no significant change in intensity with pixel number since the scan is along the direction of the edge. By sorting the data based on this contrast, poor quality scans that will produce erroneous edge location values (especially those that run nearly parallel to and edge) can be detected and discarded from the data.

By applying this four-scan method to all pixels near the edge of the shape of interest, it is possible to produce a full two-dimensional image shape where each point on the edge shares a common origin. The result is shown in Figure 9. In particular, to obtain the result shown in Figure 9, four scans were applied at each of the constant intensity points until the entire shape was tested.

Figure 10 shows both the shape measured by using a constant intensity method and the shape measured by using a method embodying this invention. Figures 11 and 12 show enlarged portions of Figure 10. It should be noted that the method of this invention, in comparison with the constant intensity approximation method, produces a narrower vertical line width for the constant intensity value and edge detection algorithm used here.

Although the technique disclosed herein was developed for SEM metrology, it applies equally well to other detection devices, such as optical, AFM, and SFM.

The data processing needed to perform this invention may be done on any suitable computer, and Figure 13 illustrates, as an example, a computer of a type that may be used in the practice of this invention. Viewed externally in Figure 13, a computer system has a central processing unit 42 having disk drives 44A and 44B. Disk drive indications 44A and 44B are merely symbolic of a number of disk drives that might be accommodated by the computer system. Typically, these would include a floppy disk drive such as 44A, a hard disk drive (not shown externally) and a CD ROM drive indicated by slot 44B.

The number and type of drives vary, usually, with different computer configurations. The computer has the display 46 upon which information is displayed. A keyboard 50 and a mouse 52 are normally also available as input devices.

Figure 14 shows a block diagram of the internal hardware of the computer of Figure 13. A bus 54 serves as the

main information highway, interconnecting the other components of the computer. CPU 56 is the central processing unit of the system, performing calculations and logic operations required to execute programs. Read only memory 60 and random access memory 62 constitute the main memory of the computer. Disk controller 64 interfaces one or more disk drives to the system bus 54. These disk drives may be floppy disk drives, such as 66, internal or external hard drives, such as 70, or CD ROM or DVD (Digital Video Disks) drives, such as 72. A display interface 74 interfaces a display 76 and permits information from the bus to be viewed on the display. Communications with external devices can occur over communications port 78.

Figure 15 shows a memory medium 80 that may be used to hold a computer program for implementing the present invention, and this medium may be used in any suitable way with any appropriate computer to carry out the invention. Typically, memory media such as a floppy disk, or a CD ROM, or a Digital Video Disk will contain the program information for controlling the computer to enable the computer to perform its functions in accordance with the invention.

While it is apparent that the invention herein disclosed is well calculated to fulfill the objects stated above, it will be appreciated that numerous modifications and embodiments may be devised by those skilled in the art, and it is intended that the appended claims cover all such modifications and embodiments as fall within the true spirit and scope of the present invention.

## Claims

1 1. A method of extracting two-dimensional image shapes  
2 from a two-dimensional array of pixel data, the method  
3 comprising the steps of:

4  
5 selecting intensity vs. pixel information in at least one  
6 direction in the vicinity of an edge of the image shape;

7  
8 recognizing scans with sufficient contrast as containing  
9 edge information;

10  
11 subjecting acceptable scans to an edge detection  
12 algorithm;

13  
14 detecting the edge location; and

15  
16 generating a locus of points that define the two-  
17 dimensional shape of the image from the detected edge  
18 values.

1 2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the edge  
2 detection algorithm is a user defined edge detection  
3 algorithm that is tailored to the application.

1 3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the selecting  
2 step includes the step of selecting intensity vs. pixel  
3 information in a plurality of directions in the vicinity  
4 of an edge of the image shape.

1 4. A method according to Claim 3, wherein the selecting  
2 step includes the step of selecting intensity vs. pixel  
3 information in at least four directions.

1 5. A method according to Claim 1, wherein said at least  
2 one direction is normal to the approximate edge location.

1 6. Apparatus for extracting two-dimensional shape  
2 information from an image, of a submicron structure,  
3 formed on an array of detectors, comprising:

4  
5 means for determining intensity vs. detector location  
6 information for detectors on at least one scan in at  
7 least one direction in the vicinity of an edge of the  
8 image;

9  
10 means for processing identified scans according to an  
11 edge detection algorithm to identify points on the edge  
12 of the image; and

13  
14 means for generating a locus of points that define the  
15 two-dimensional shape of the structure from the  
16 identified edge points.

1 7. Apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein the edge  
2 detection algorithm is a user defined edge detection  
3 algorithm that is tailored to the application.

1 8. Apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein the selecting  
2 means includes means for selecting intensity vs. pixel

information in a plurality of directions in the vicinity of an edge of the image shape.

9. Apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein the plurality of directions includes at least four directions.

10. Apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said at least one direction is normal to an approximate edge location.

11. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for extracting two-dimensional image shapes from image data on a pixel array, the method steps comprising:

selecting intensity vs. pixel information in at least one direction in the vicinity of an edge of the image shape;

recognizing scans with sufficient contrast as containing edge information;

subjecting acceptable scans to an edge detection algorithm;

detecting the edge location; and

generating a locus of points that define the two-dimensional shape of the image from the detected edge values.

12. A program storage device according to Claim 11, wherein the edge detection algorithm is a user defined

3 edge detection algorithm that is tailored to the  
4 application.

1 13. A program storage device according to Claim 11,  
2 wherein the selecting step includes the step of selecting  
3 intensity vs. pixel information in a plurality of  
4 directions in the vicinity of an edge of the image shape.

1 14. A program storage device according to Claim 13,  
2 wherein the selecting step includes the step of selecting  
3 intensity vs. pixel information in at least four  
4 directions.

1 15. A program storage device according to Claim 11,  
2 wherein one of the directions is normal to an approximate  
3 edge location.



METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR MEASUREMENT OF FULL  
TWO DIMENSIONAL SUBMICRON SHAPES

Abstract

5       A method and apparatus for extracting two-dimensional  
image shapes from image data on a pixel array. The  
method comprises the steps of selecting intensity vs.  
pixel information in a plurality of directions in the  
vicinity of an edge of the image shape, and recognizing  
10       scans with sufficient contrast as containing edge  
information. Acceptable scans are subjected to an edge  
detection algorithm, the edge location is detected, and a  
locus of points is generated, from the detected edge  
values, that define the two-dimensional shape of the  
15       image. The edge detection algorithm may be a user  
defined edge detection algorithm that is tailored to the  
application. Also, in a preferred embodiment, the  
selecting step includes the step of selecting intensity  
vs. pixel information in at least four directions, and  
20       the plurality of directions are angularly spaced apart at  
least about 22 degrees. With one embodiment, one of  
these directions may be normal to an approximate edge  
location.

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W. Sabo

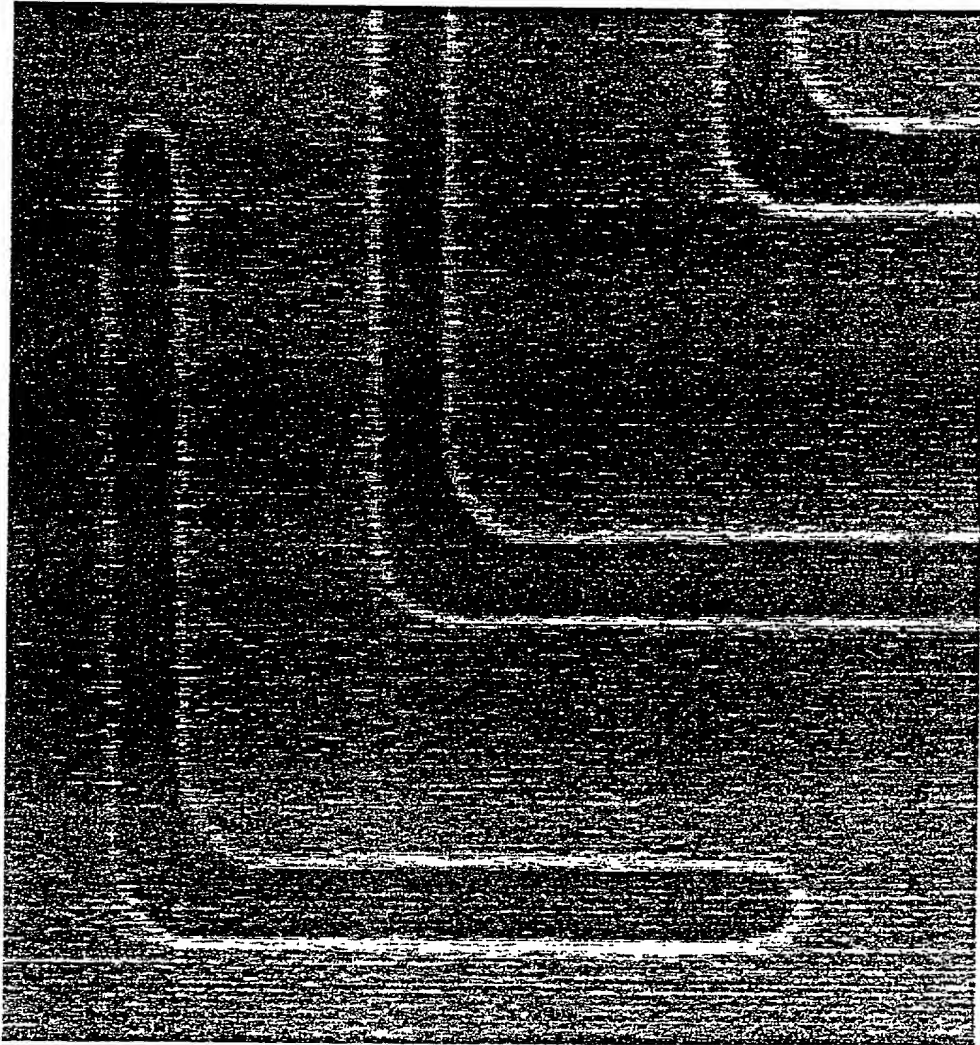


Fig. 1

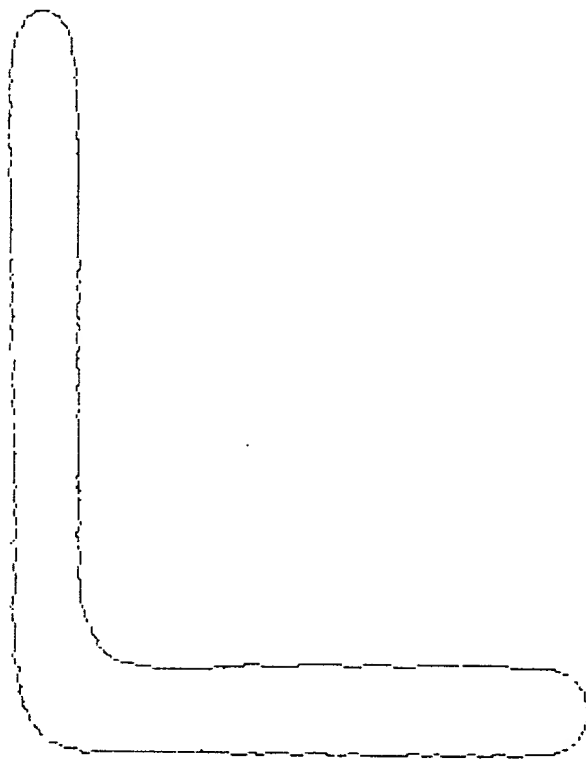


Fig. 2

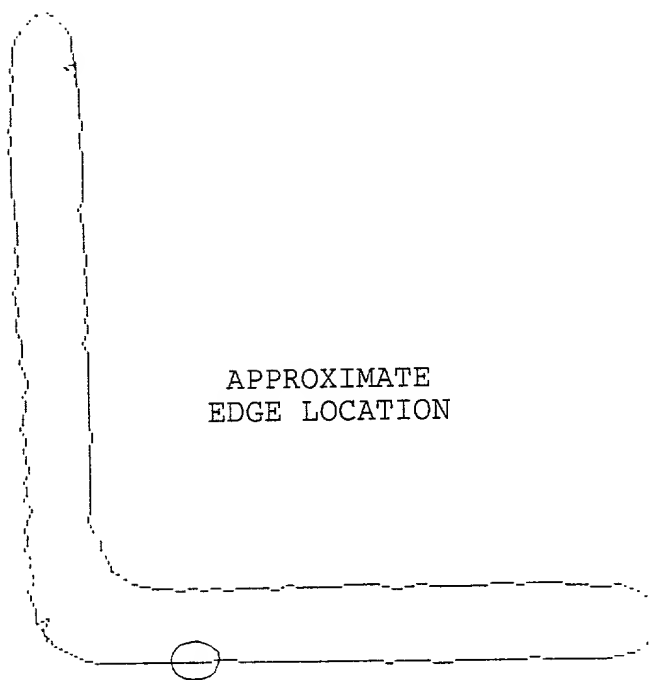


Fig. 3

004420-04341500

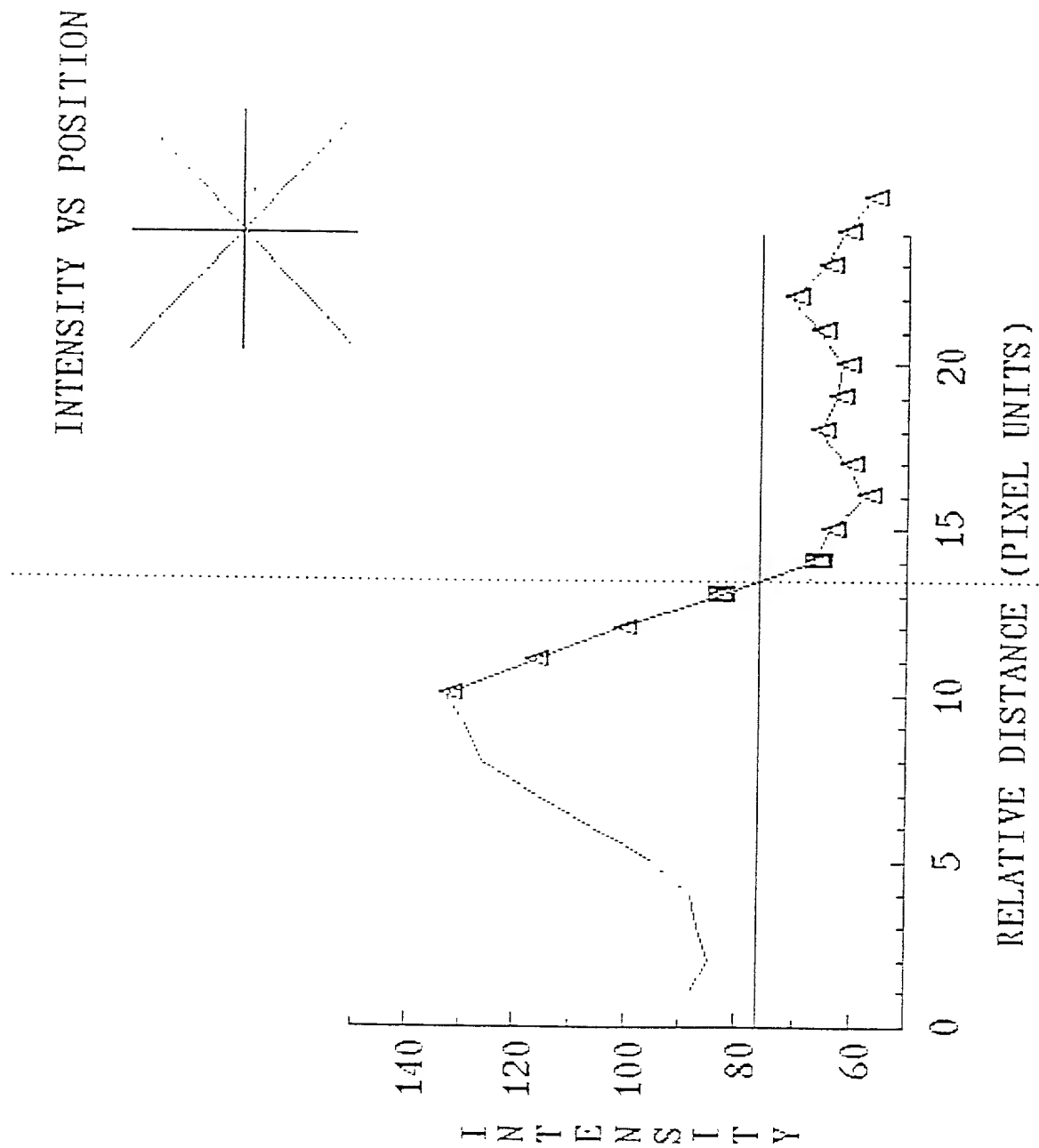


Fig. 4

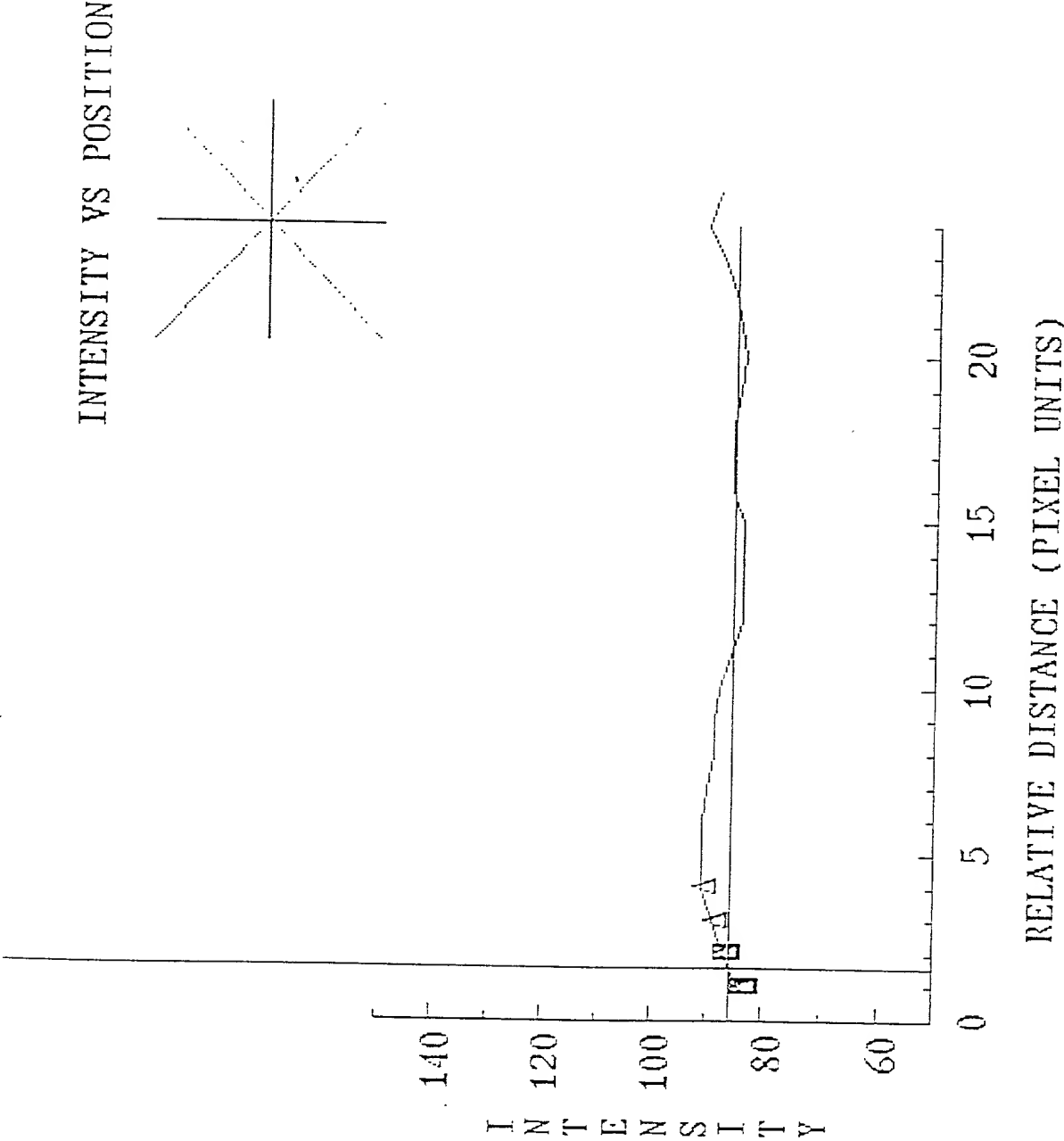


Fig. 5

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INTENSITY VS POSITION

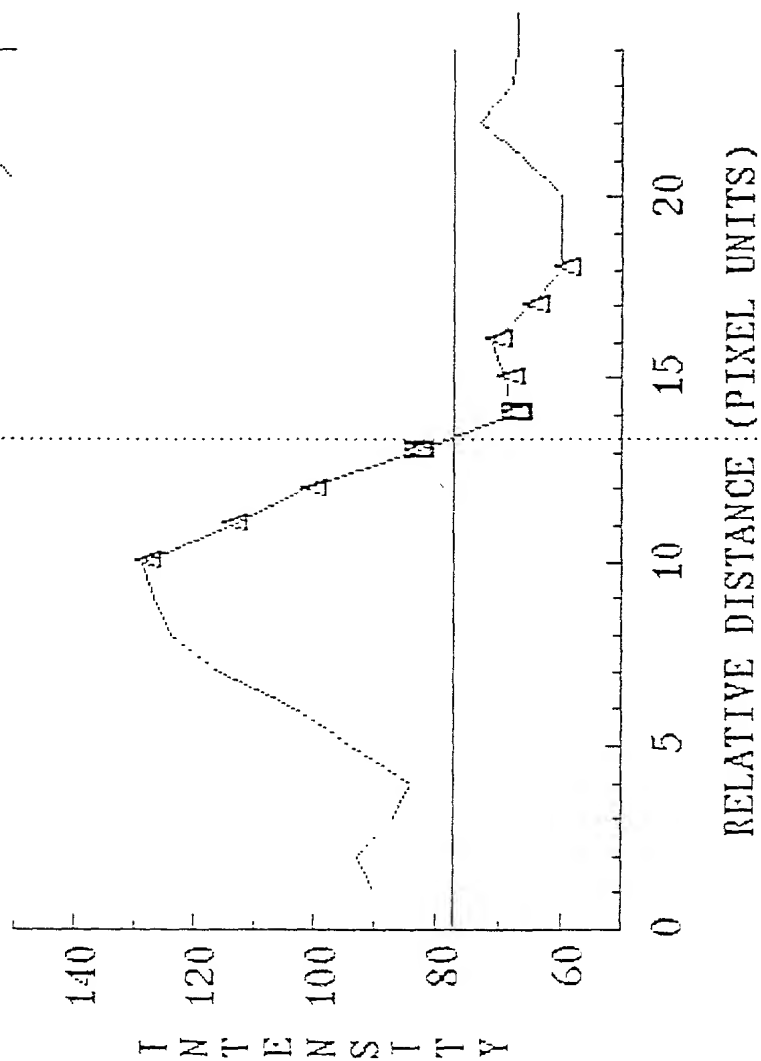
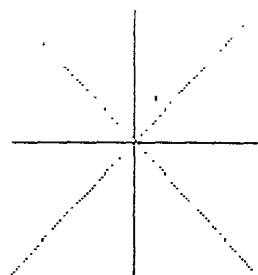
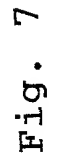


Fig. 6



00420 02921500

INTENSITY VS POSITION  
FOR 4 SCAN DIRECTIONS

INTENSITY VS POSITION

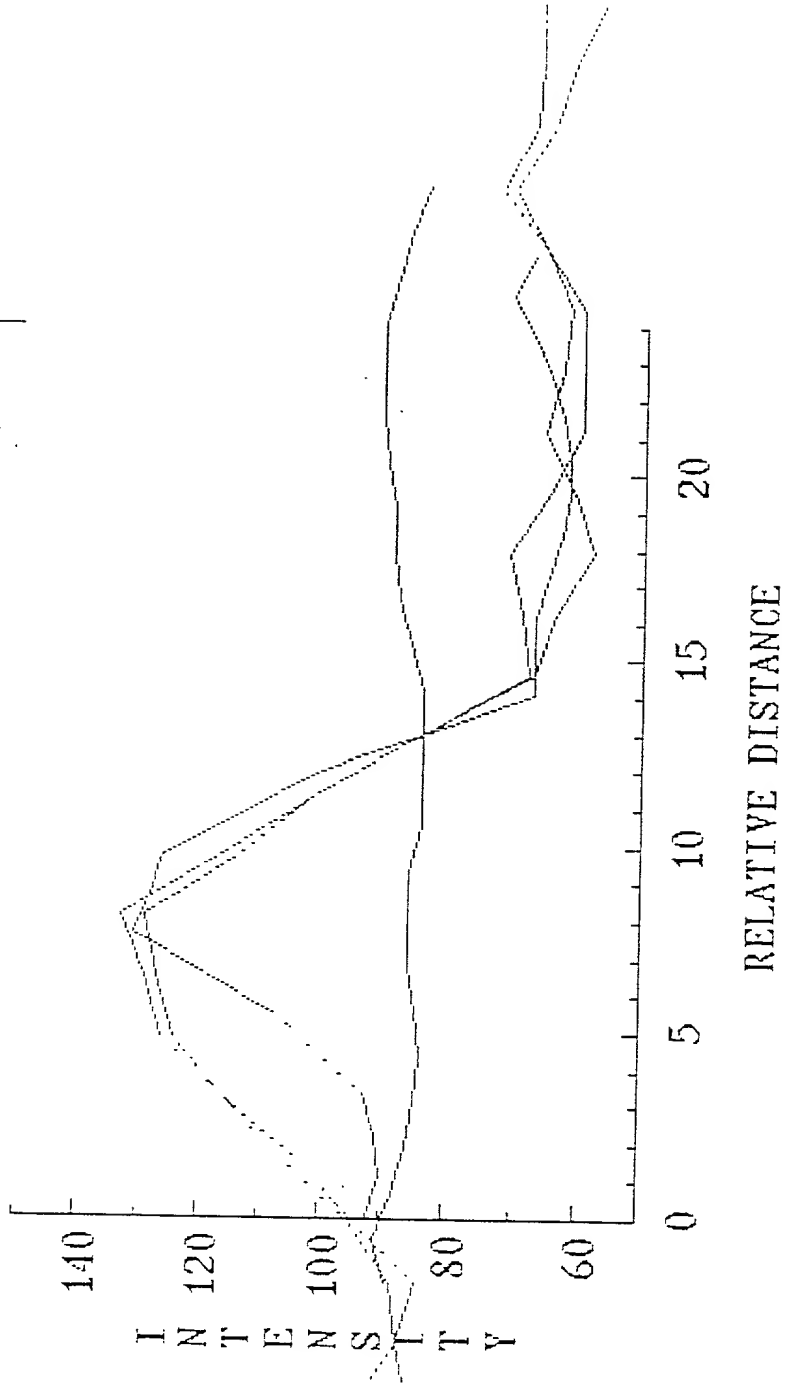
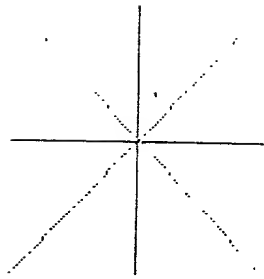


Fig. 8



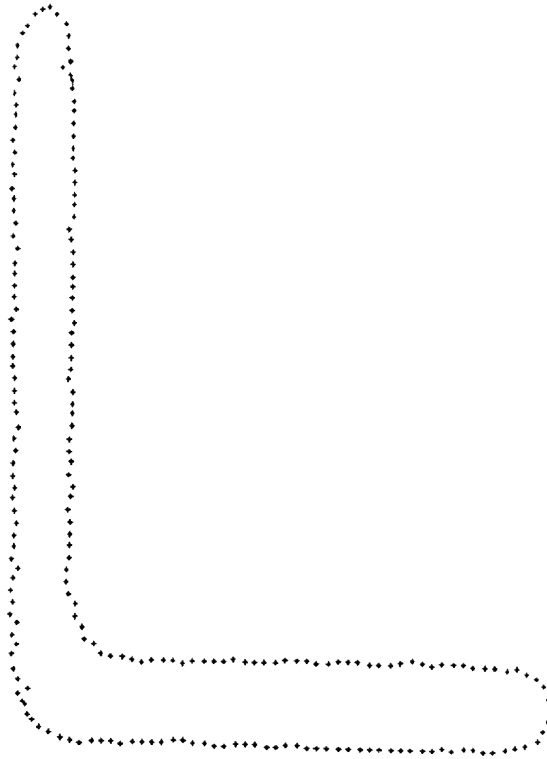


Fig. 9

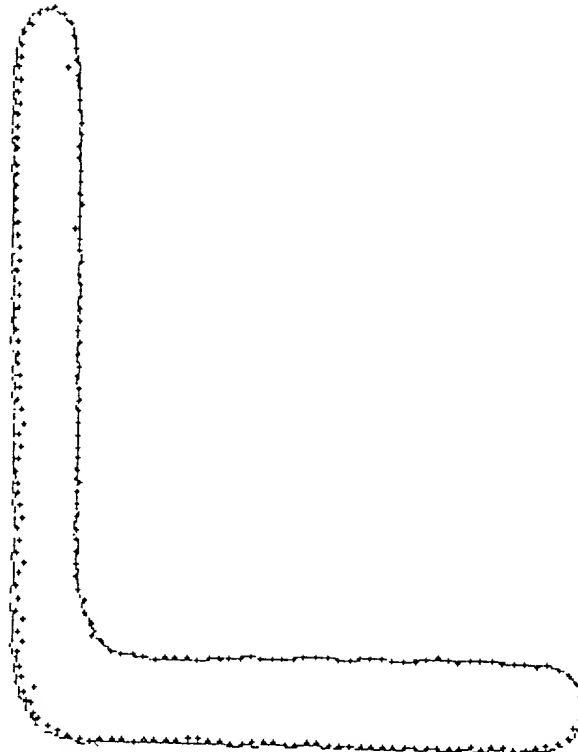


Fig. 10

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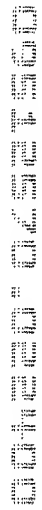


Fig. 11

covered section

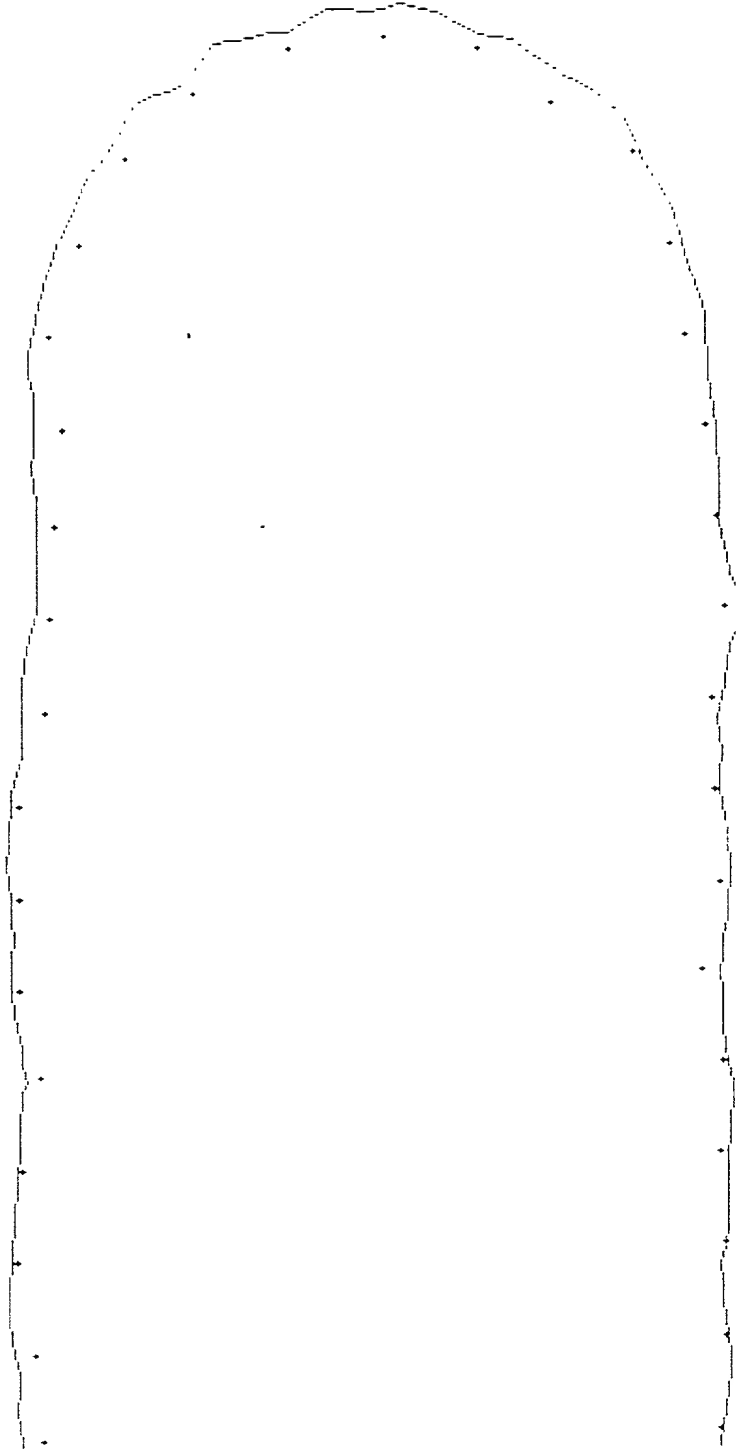
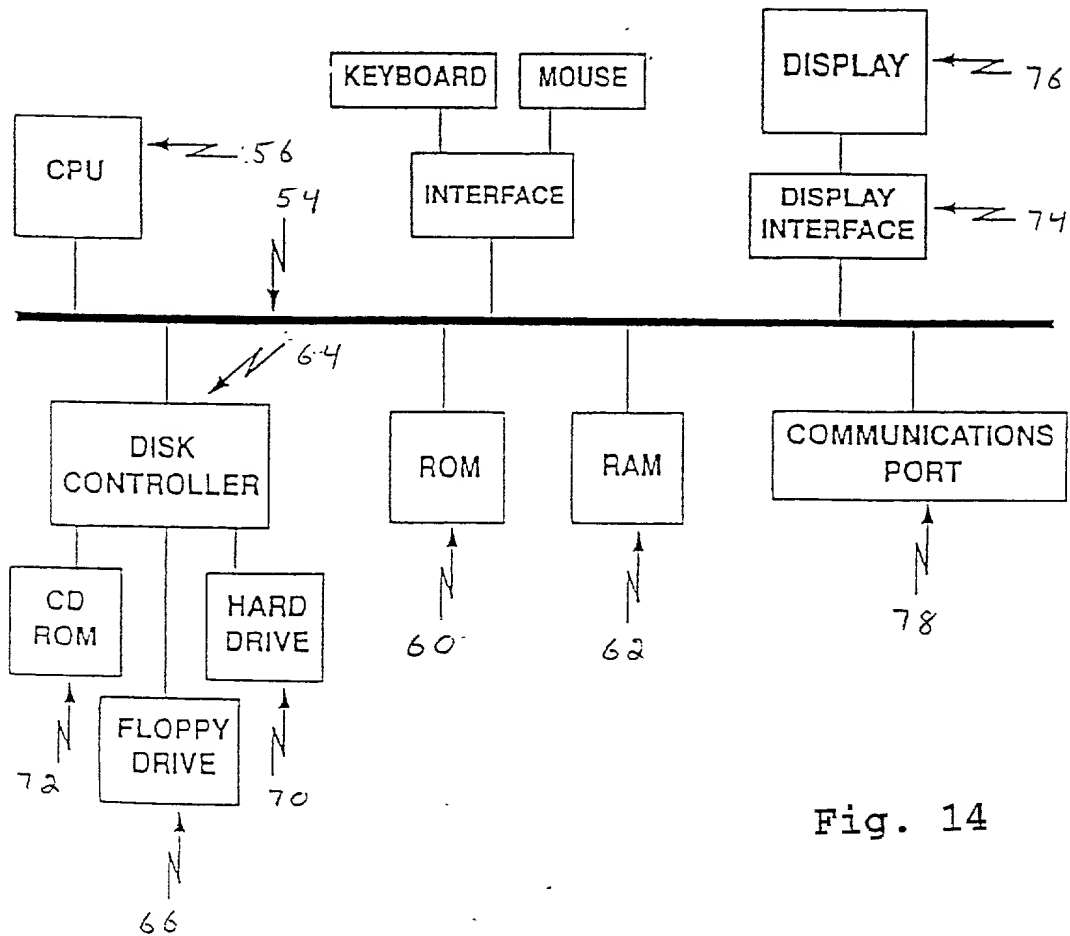
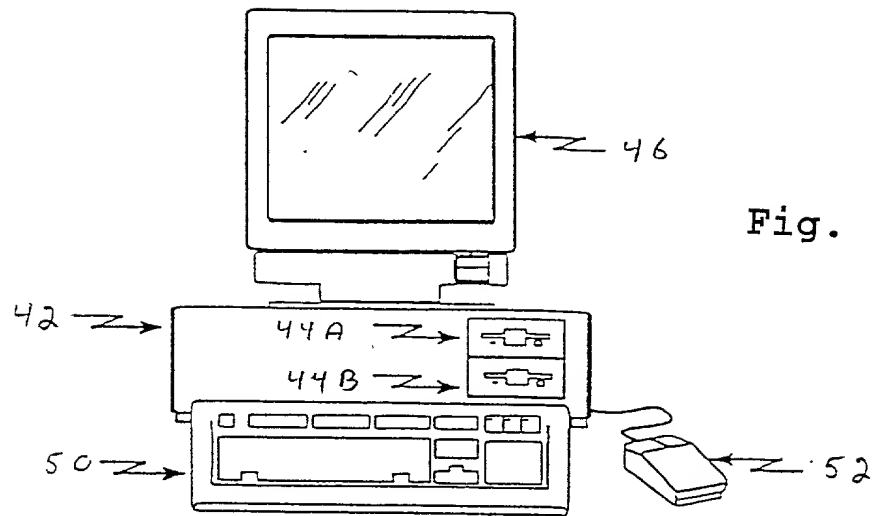


Fig. 12



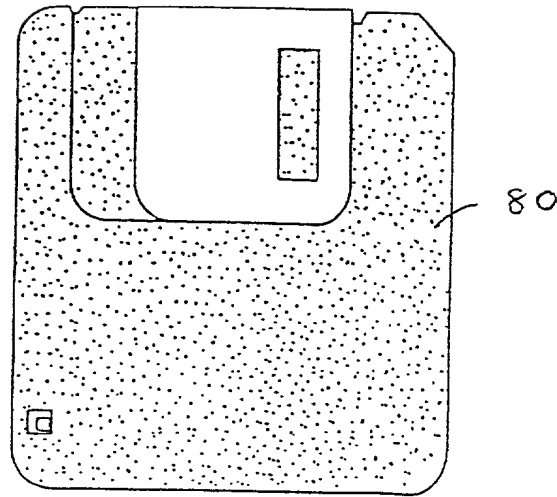


Fig. 15

## Declaration and Power of Attorney for Patent Application

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name; I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled: METHOD FOR MEASUREMENT OF FULL TWO-DIMENSIONAL SUBMICRON SHAPES

the specification of which (check one)

☒ is attached hereto.

☐ was filed on \_\_\_\_\_ as Application Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_ and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above- identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the patentability of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s):

Number	Country	Day/Month/Year	Priority Claimed
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I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information material to the patentability of this application as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56 which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

Prior U.S. Applications:

Serial No.	Filing Date	Status
------------	-------------	--------

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorneys and/or agents to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith: Mark F. Chadurjian (Reg. No. 30,739); Dale M. Crockatt (Reg. No. 35,109); Richard M. Kotulak (Reg. No. 27,712); James M. Leas (Reg. No. 34,372); William D. Sabo (Reg. No. 27,465); Eugene I. Shkurko (Reg. No. 36,678); Robert A. Walsh (Reg. No. 26,516); Howard J. Walter (Reg. No. 24,832); Richard A. Henkler, Reg. No. 39,220; Christopher A. Hughes (Reg. No. 26,914); Edward A. Pennington (Reg. No. 32,588); John E. Hoel (Reg. No. 26,279); Joseph C. Redmond, Jr. (Reg. No. 18,753); Richard L. Catania, (Reg. No. 32,608); Leopold Presser, (Reg. No. 19,827); Stephen D. Murphy (Reg. No. 22,002); Frank S. DiGiglio (Reg. No. 31,346); Kenneth L. King (Reg. No. 24,223) and Edward W. Grolz (Reg. No. 33,705).

Send all correspondence to:

Richard L. Catania, Esq.  
Scully, Scott, Murphy & Presser  
400 Garden City Plaza  
Garden City, NY 11530

Direct Telephone Calls to: Richard L. Catania., (516) 742-4343

## Declaration and Power of Attorney for Patent Application

- (1) Inventor: Edward W. Conrad  
Signature: Edward W. Conrad 2/22/2000  
Date  
Residence: 4139 North Cambridge Road, Jeffersonville, Vermont 05464  
Citizenship: United States of America  
Post Office Address: Same as above
- (2) Inventor: David P. Paul  
Signature: David P. Paul 2/22/2000  
Date  
Residence: 22 Loubier Drive, Essex Junction, Vermont 05452  
Citizenship: United States of America  
Post Office Address: Same as above